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U.S., Mexico Plan Drug War Cooperation

Meeting of Top Officials Set for Summer

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The attorneys general of the United States and Mexico agreed yesterday to hold a "summit" of the two nations' top law-enforcement officials this summer and to consider cooperative prosecutions of drug traffickers in the future.

U.S. officials have criticized Mexico's performance in the investigation of the Feb. 7 kidnaping and subsequent murder of U.S. drug agent Enrique Camarena Salazar and Alfredo Zavala Avelar, a Mexican who flew occasional missions for the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration.

U.S. Attorney General Edwin Meese III and his Mexican counterpart, Sergio Garcia Ramirez, met for five hours yesterday and said in a statement that they had agreed to share information "about corruption linked to drug trafficking . . . and to cooperate fully in strengthening the eradication programs in Mexico."

In addition to the summit, they agreed to meet again in six months to review progress.

Acting DEA Administrator John C. Lawn, who participated in the discussions, said it was agreed "that DEA would work in teams with representatives from the Mexican Federal Judicial Police targeting major traffickers in Mexico. We would share intelligence and work jointly on those investigations until the traffickers are brought to justice."

Deputy Attorney General D. Lowell Jensen, who also took part in the talks, said the United States already has authority to file charges in U.S. courts against Mexican traffickers who violate U.S. law.

He added that an existing extradition treaty permits Mexico to send accused traffickers to the United States for trial.

Jensen said yesterday that there was no discussion of cutting off foreign assistance to Mexico, as has been suggested in Congress, but that "we were firm . . . in what we think needs to be done."

Jensen said, for example, that there were discussions of requiring U.S. observers present on drug-eradication flights over poppy or marijuana fields.

When the United States first provided eradication funds to Mexico, such observers were required, and the program was considered successful.

But the observers were phased out, and federal law enforcement officials say there have been cases in which DEA agents were directed toward the wrong fields and in which water was sprayed rather than herbicides.

The State Department, in an annual report, found that the amounts of heroin and marijuana coming into the United States from Mexico last year increased.

Mexican authorities have said they believe that several major drug traffickers, including Rafael Caro Quintero, Angel Felix Gallardo, Ernesto Fonseca and Juan Ramon Mata Ballasteros, were behind the Camarena and Zavala murders.

The bodies of the two men were found March 6 on a farm near Guadalajara. Both had been tortured.

Mexican authorities last week charged several members of the Jalisco State Judicial Police with crimes related to the Camarena case.

A number of other persons, reportedly including members of the Mexican Federal Judicial Police—the Mexican equivalent of the FBI—are being held for questioning in the case.

Lawn said DEA agents stationed in Mexico worked with Mexican authorities until the bodies were found.

After that, he said, the investigation was taken over by the Mexican attorney general, and cooperation between the DEA and Mexican authorities ceased.